

32 THE EXCELLENCY
OF
WISDOM,

Disclosing it self in

The Virtues of a good Life:

RECOMMENDED

To the Natives of *Warwick-shire*,
IN A

SERMON

PREACHED

To them on their *Anniversary Feast-*
Day, in *London*, *Nov. 30. 1675.*

By *THOMAS WILLIS*, D.D. Vicar of
Kingston upon Thames, and one of His *MAJESTIES*
Chaplains in Ordinary.

Who is a wise man, and endued with Knowledge amongst you? Let
him shew out of a good Conversation his Works, with Meekness of
Wisdom. *Iam. 3. 13.*

Tū dūti i dūpōdū cōpū lū i dū dū wēl cū cū dū dū lū,
ū i dū dū dū dū dū, dū dū dū dū. lū dū. Pēlū l. 4. Ep. 174.

LONDON,

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1734
1675
FO

Imprimatur

Concio hæc (cui titulus, *The Excellency
of Wisdom.*)

Ex Aedibus Lambethanis,
Decemb. 7. 1675.

Reverendo Dno Ar-
chiepiscopo Cant. à
Sacris Domesticis

Geo. Hooper.

ERRATA.

Page 4. line 3. for the, read, your Endeavours. p. 8. l. 10. for
men, r. man p. 11. l. 24. r. Usefulness. p. 19. Marg. for Famb.
r. Jamb. and for לְמִדּוֹת r. לְמִדּוֹת p. 24. l. 8. for of the, r. of
Wisdom p. 31. l. ult. for de serve, r. discern.

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
ROBERT Lord BROOK,
Baron of Beauchampscourt in War-
wickshire, and Lord Lieutenant of
the County of Stafford.

My Lord,

WISDOM and VIRTUE,
which oft wait at the
Gate of HONOUR, and hardly
find admittance, do here present
themselves before Your Lordship,
in Hopes of that Noble Entertain-
ment, which is wont to be given, by
Persons of Honour, to their Nearest
Allies. They are never repuls'd by
any without Wrong and Disgrace to
themselves; nor by any entertain'd,

The Epistle

with a due Regard, without an Addition to their *Honour and Happiness*. The Person, by whose Hand they are brought in this *humble Dress* into Your Presence, begs the Pardon of his Rudeness in this Approach, and leaving these *Excellencies* to Your Lordships Entertainment, instantly withdraws himself to his due distance, and waits (with *Mordecai, at the Gate*) in Hope, that having presented these *Virgin-Beauties* before Your judicious Eye, they will appear so agreeable to Your *Noble Mind*, that they will presently obtain that entire *Affection and Esteem*, which will facilitate their Admission into so *indissoluble an Union*, as shall for ever exclude the Fear or Suspicion of a *Divorce*. And by this innocent

Dedicatory.

cent and honourable *Polygamy*, may Your Lordship be *Blessed* with a *Beautiful-Offspring* of such excellent and amiable *Virtues*, as may support the *Honour of Your Name*, and be the growing *Glory of Your House*.

These Excellencies, *Wisdom and Virtue*, which I have here presented before Your Lordship, are of more than *Noble Descent*, of Divine Original, the *Offspring of the uncreated Goodness*. But I fear that (as sometimes the *incarnate Wisdom of God*) they find but little *Regard* amongst the greater Part of the *Sons of Men*. And therefore that their *Reception* (particularly in our own Country, for its singular *Honour and Advantage*) may be answerable to their *Dignity*, I have

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have endeavour'd to unvail their excellent *Beauty*, and manifest their singular *Usefulness*, in the following Discourse; which (though its *Meanness* makes it even afraid of Appearance, yet imboldned by the Assurance of the *Goodness* of the *Design*, and *Seasonableness* of the *Endeavour*) I do here humbly offer to Your Lordships Hand.

To accept so *small* a *Present* from so mean a Person, will be an *Act* of *Humility*; to become a *Great Example* of that *Excellency* which is here commended to all men, will be a *singular Glory*. If the *Doctrine* delivered in this Discourse, be commended to our Countrymen, by so *illustrious an Example*, (it will certainly be more powerfully operative and influential.

So

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So shall Your Lordship shine as a Great Light among many lesser Stars: neither shall your brighter Glory suffer an Eclipse in Death it self, but shine in a higher Orb amongst those fair Lights, which adorn those glorious Mansions, wherein the Sovereign Goodness reigns in eternal Glory.

May Wisdom so conduct Your Lordship in all Your Affairs, and Virtue so adorn and beaurify all Your Actions, that You may be the Honour of Your House, and Ornament of Your Countrey; that having planted Virtues to a happy thriving on Earth, and gathered their pleasant Fruits in Praises and Prosperities, you may at length be carried up in Triumph, by glorious Angels, into Heaven,

The Epistle, &c.

Heaven, there to be crown'd with
immortal Glories, in the Kingdom
of God. May the Splendour
of Your Lordships *Virtue and*
Goodness be so great, that the
Spreading Raies thereof may co-
ver your whole Countrey, and
extend their *exbilarating Light*
even to the remote *Obscurities*
of,

My Lord,

Your Lordships most *Humble*,

and most *Obsequious* Servant,

THO. WILLIS.

TO THE READER.

Reader,

THough the following Discourse be directed to the Natives of one Country, the subject of it is the Great Concern of all men. All men do certainly Desire to be Happy: but no man can possibly be so, unless he become truly Wise. Now the certain Way and Means to acquire Wisdom, and then to improve it in the Exercise of Religion and Virtue, for the Attainment of true Happiness, is prescrib'd in the following Discourse.

Man is a noble piece of active Earth, being animated with that immortal Fire, which at first came down from Heaven, and inspirits him to those Motions, which conduce to the Preservation and Perfection of his Being. The Soul of man is a Spark of Heavenly Fire, which at first was kindled by the || Breath of God, and is a || Gen. 2. 7. Principle of those Actions, whereby he discovers the Excellency of his Nature, and Nobleness of his Original. In this little Spark, inclosed by the * Hand of God, in a || curious Frame, a Body fit- * Psal. 119. 73. ly organiz'd for Action, there is both Light and Heat: Light for apprehension, and Heat for Action, || Psal. 139. 14. God hath given to man as well an apprehensive Minde, as an active Spirit. Hereupon, if
B he

To the Reader.

be all according to his Nature and Being, upon his Apprehension of the Excellency of things, he is earnest in the Pursuit of the most excellent Attainments. Such are those Virtues, which are apt to adorn his Mind and Life, and tend to exalt him to a State of Honour and Happiness. This is the great Work of every man in the World. And therefore, O man, whosoever thou art, open thine Eyes, and behold the things which are excellent, and then earnestly endeavour the Acquisition of them. Amongst these Excellent Attainments, wouldest thou be inform'd what is most excellent, and so most worthy of thy greatest Diligence in the Pursuit? To this thou art directed in the following Discourse by an infallible

7^o *Prov. 4. Orack, delivered in these words, * Wisdom is the Principal thing: therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding.*

Wisdom is indeed the principal Excellency, as being the most pleasant, the most profitable, and the most satisfactory of all Attainments: Wisdom (saith the Divine Philosopher) will make a man prosperous and happy in all things||.

||' H^oo^oia
 xax^o
 di^ox^o
 x^oo^o i^o x^o
 x^oo^o x^o
 Plat. in
 Euthyd.

^a Eccl. 7.

12.

*And saith the Kingly Preacher, Wisdom is a Defence, and Money is a Defence: but the excellency of Knowledge is, that Wisdom giveth Life to them that have it *. 'Tis Wisdom that will give you an excellency above other men, and make you no less Happy than the Angels of God.*

But who knows the Path of Wisdom, or the Place of her Habitation? Though you should dig to the Centre of the Earth, or dive to the Bottom

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Bottom of the Sea || *you could not find this in-estimable Treasure: though you should ascend to the Stars of Heaven, you could not reach to the Throne of Wisdom. Wisdom sets her Throne above the Stars, and reigns in that Region of Light, wherein God himself dwells*. But at his Appointment she descends from her high Throne, and makes the Heart of man her humble Seat. But then man must make his Approaches to God, in the Exercises of Religion and Piety. In these Paths you shall arrive at the Throne of Wisdom, and she will set upon your Head a Royal Diadem of Beauty, a resplendent Crown of Glory.* || Job 28.
12, 13, 14.
* Prov. 8.
21.
8.

Wisdom cannot possibly be separated from Piety, and the Virtues of a good Life. For he that apprehends God to be the highest Being and chiefest Good, if he do not honour and obey him, that he may at length attain that Happiness, which lies in the full Fruition of him, is not wise; yea, he is guilty of the greatest Folly, in that he neglects the onely Means, by which he might attain the highest Happiness. The Sun then may as soon be disrob'd of his Beams, as Wisdom can be divested of the Rites of Religion and Sanctity, which crown it, in all Conditions, with a conspicuous Glory.

Certainly, Atheism and Irreligion, Sin and Wickedness (as I have endeavour'd, though but in few words, to evince in the following Sermon) is the greatest Folly in the World. It is God that made us, and not we our selves ||, and in him we live and move, and have our being, and yet The Fool* || Psal. 110.
3.
* Acts 17.
28.

To the Reader.

¶ Psal. 14. hath said in his Heart, There is no God ||. How
 1. great, how strange is this Folly! The wrath of
 * Rom. 1. God is reveal'd from Heaven*, against the sins of
 18. men, in various Plagues and Punishments; and
 || Prov. 14. yet Fools make a Mock at Sin ||. As a mad man,
 9. who casteth Fire-brands, Arrows and Death:
 so is he who throwes out Oaths, Curses, and Blas-
 * Prov. 27. phemies, and saith, Am not I in Sport *? These
 28. men play with Lightning, and mock the mighty
 Thunder, and in a proud Scorn, open their nak-
 ed Breasts to the flaming Arrows of the Al-
 mighty. They deride Religion, scoff at Devot-
 ion, laugh and jeer the Virtues of Temperance,
 Sobriety, Chastity out of Countenance. These men
 come forth upon the Stage, and so demean them-
 selves, as if they accounted it the highest Wis-
 dom to act the greatest Follies, in the Sight of
 God, and Angels, and Men. For they stand up-
 on their Heads and Shake their Heels against
 Heaven, They bear themselves upon the Strength
 of their Reason and Parts, in the Contempt of
 Religion and Piety; as if they accounted it a
 piece of Gallantry to dare Heaven by the Inso-
 ¶ 1. Pet. 2. lency of their Crimes, and to awake || Slumbering
 3. Vengeance to their own Destruction. Now are
 not these men guilty of great Folly and Mad-
 ness? What Folly is it in a mortal man to lift
 up a Flag of Defiance against Almighty God?
 Shall a poor Worm that crawls in the Dust, or
 Moth that frets a Garment, contend with a Man?
 Alas! he can instantly trample the Worm under
 his Feet, and crumble the Moth to Dust with
 his Fingers. Greater is the Disproportion which

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*a mortal man bears to the Mighty God. More easily can he turn the strongest man into Dust, and throw the stoutest Sinner into Hell. A man therefore must walk his Heart from Wickedness ||, || Eze. 4. and his Hands in Innocency *; he must repent ^{14.} of his Sins, and reform his Life, or else (though he ^{6.} Psal. 26. should be admir'd by all men for the Greatness of his Wit) he can never attain to the least Degree of true Wisdom.*

*Thus you see Impiety is utterly inconsistent with this Divine excellency. And therefore if you do desire to become truly Wise, you must resolve to become really Religious. But then when you have attain'd any Degree of Wisdom, let it be your chief Care to retain it, as the most excellent Possession, the richest Treasure in the World. There is a certain * Tradition, that Solomon ^{Ex Cod.} had a Ring, which while he preserved (as Sam- ^{Arab. Pis.} son his Hair) he retain'd a singular Excellency of Wisdom above all other men. But being over amorous towards certain Women, they robb'd him at once of a double Treasure, his Ring and Wisdom. Wisdom is an Excellency of the Mind: 'tis not so much darkned by any thing, as by the Lust of the Flesh. The Suns Glories are obscur'd by the Fogs that rise from the Earth: and the Lights of Wisdom are obfuscated, and at length extinguish'd, by an Indulgence of sensual Appetites and Inclinations. And therefore be careful (as becomes Citizens of Heaven, who are Pilgrims and Strangers on Earth) to abstain from those fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul ||. ^{11.} Do not for the base and sordid.*

To the Reader.

fordid Pleasure of Sin, hazard the Loss of that Excellency, which is your Crown and Glory. Live in the serious Exercise of Solid Piety, and all Christian Virtues, here on Earth, and you shall at length be admitted to the Participation of Everlasting Pleasures, in the Presence of God, in Heaven. That no man, who shall peruse these Lines, may fall short of this Felicity, this Discourse of Wisdom, as a Lamp lighted from the Sun, is here held forth by the Hand of

London,
Dec. 7. 1673.

A Servant of Him who

is the Saviour of men,

THO. WILLIS.

THE

THE
EXCELLENCY
OF
WISDOM, &c.

PROV. IV. 7, 8, 9.

VII. *Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom: and with all thy getting get Understanding.*

VIII. *Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to Honour, when thou dost embrace her.*

IX. *She shall give to thine Head an Ornament of Grace: a Crown of Glory shall she deliver to thee.*

GOD is the Beginning and End of all Things. With Him (as it becomes us) we begin this Day: to Him, and to his Glory, as our ultimate End, it behoves us to direct the Actions of this Day, and of our whole Life, that in him, when Time shall be no more, we may be most Blessed for ever.

To God we owe our Being, who gave us our Birth in a good Land, and in a pleasant Place,
in

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in the same Country, *the Eden of England*; and thence transferr'd us, for our better Being, into the Great City of the Land, which by its sudden Rise, in so much Splendour, from its woful Ruines, is become *the Wonder of the World*. To Him give we the Glory of our Being and Brotherhood, the Praise of all the Blessings which contribute to our present Well-being, and encourage our Hopes of future Blessedness.

This is our Work, this our Duty at this Time, and your appearance (my much Honoured and Beloved Countrymen) in this Place, is a visible Pledg of your Readiness and Resolution to perform it. For that ye may give unto God the Glory due unto his Name, ye are this Day come unto his House, and are here ready to hearken to his *Holy Oracles*, that ye may be inform'd, what is most excellent, most acceptable to Him, and most honourable for your selves, in the Discharge of your Duty.

Many excellent things have been recommended to you by the Ministers of his Holy Mysteries upon the like Occasion, who have all design'd your Advance in Virtue, that ye might become excellent Persons, and truly Honourable in the Eye of the World, and in the sight of God himself. All that have spoken unto you in the Name of God (as those three young men, who contended for the Glory of uttering the wisest Sentence before *K. Darius*) have endeavoured to recommend to you that Virtue, which would render you the *Worthies* of your Country,

Country, the most accomplisht Persons for Excellency and Goodness. After them all I come forth this Day, and tell your every one from the Mouth of the Lord, *Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, &c.* Here's,

I. *An Encomium of Wisdom*; She is commend-
ed to us as the most excellent of all things;
Wisdom is the principal thing. Dull Mortals!
Degenerate Mankind! Do men discern the Glit-
ter of Gold, the sparkling Lustre of Gems, the
Beauty and Sweetness of Gain, as one of the
fairest Flowers in the Worlds Garden, and can
they not discern the *Excellency of Wisdom*,
without a Verbal Encomium? Are things
brought to that pass, that she must bring her
Letters of Commendation with her from Hea-
ven, or she can hardly find Entertainment a-
mongst men upon Earth? Must she have her
Herald go before her to prepare her Way,
by proclaiming her Excellency? However now
we are utterly inexcusable if we do not give her
an agreeable Entertainment, when we are in-
form'd of her Quality, and told she is *the prin-
cipal thing*, she holds the Principality amongst
those Virtues, that ennoble, enrich, and adorn
the Mind of man.

II. *An earnest Perswasion*, backt with Argu-
ments, to endeavour the Acquisition and Im-
provement of this Excellent Virtue; *Therefore get
Wisdom; — Exalt her, and she shall promote
thee.* — This is the Counsel and Advice of
the Holiest of Kings, *David*, recommended to
us by the *Wiseſt of Men*, Solomon. 'Tis to

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a threefold Act; 1. to Acquire, 2. Exalt, and 3. Embrace Wisdom.

1. To be diligent in the endeavours for the Acquisition of Wisdom; *Therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding*, i.e. make it thy chief Design and constant Endeavour, who pursuest any Excellency, any Advantage on Earth, to get Wisdom, as that which is most excellent and advantageous.

2. To give her the Preheminence in the Government of all the Actions of our Life. Which Advice is backt with an Argument, a Proposal and Assurance of Honour and Estimation, which shall accrue to a man thereby; *Exalt her, and she shall promote thee*. Wisdom seems to say to men, what the God of Wisdom said to Eli; *Them that honour me I will honour: and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*.

|| 1 Sam. 2. ed ||
30.

3. To entertain her with the greatest Kindness, Familiarity and Endearment that may be; to take her into the Arms and Bosom-embraces of the Soul. To this, Honour and Ornament is assur'd, Glory and Renown. *She shall bring thee to Honour when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine Head an Ornament of Grace: a Crown of Glory shall she deliver to thee*. She shall procure to thee that Praise and Estimation, which will be to thee as a graceful Ornament, as a glorious Crown. Man is the King of all Creatures; the wise man is a King amongst men, and the Glory of Wisdom is his Crown. 'Tis Wisdom will incircle thee with bright

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5

bright Glories on Earth, and entitle thee to Honour and Happiness in Heaven.

And now behold I have set a *noble Prize* before you, and would fain perswade you to a *generous Contest* for the Attainment of it. The Contest wherein I would engage you, is *to excell in Wisdom*: the Prize is an Ornament of Grace, a Crown of Glory.

To make plain the way before you, I shall

1. Enquire what Wisdom is.
2. Shew you wherein the excellency of this Acquisition lies.
3. Make it plainly appear that this excellent Endowment is attainable, and shew you by what Means.

And then I shall endeavour to perswade you every one to Diligence in the Use of the Means for the Attainment of so excellent a Virtue. All with a Design to advance you to such a Degree of Excellency and Goodness, that ye may be *the Glory of your Native Country, and the Ornament of this great City*, adding to the Splendour of its Riches and Honour, the Lustre of Wisdom and Virtue.

This is the Work which now lies before us, in the Management whereof I am oblig'd,

I. To enquire, and to give you an Accompt what Wisdom is. By the ancient Philosophers (who are follow'd by the Greek Fathers) it is thus defin'd; *Wisdom is the Knowledge of* Σοφία

ἐστὶν ἀρετή
in Solv. & ἀποκρίσιον ἀποκρίσεων, & ἡ τέχνη ἀρίστη. Alcim. de Dogm. Plat. Clem. Alex. Procl. 1.2. c. 2. Basil. Sapientia est rerum divinarum & humanarum, causarumque; quibus haec res consistuntur scititia. Cic. 1. 2. Offic.

* H ο.
 γία δι νύς
 ε, εἰς τὴν
 οὐρανὸν
 ἀνάγει.
 Arist.

the Nature and Causes, both of things Divine and Humane. Or, *Tis the Understanding and Knowledge of the most excellent things. But this is but an excellent kind of Speculative Knowledge, which may be in the Mind of a man utterly destitute of true Wisdom. Wisdom is certainly a *practick Excellency*, a Virtue that directs and influences our Actions, to the Attainment of the most excellent Ends. It's as the *Light of the Sun*, which is accompanied with that *Influence* which fructifieth the Earth.

Wisdom then is an excellent, Energetical Virtue of the Mind of man, whereby, upon a clear Apprehension and a right Judgment of things, the whole Soul is carried out, in a well govern'd Order, in an earnest and constant Pursuit of the most excellent Attainments.

In this Description I have given you the *live-liest Pourtraiture* that I can of this excellent Virtue. Be pleased to peruse her several Lineaments, and while I unvail her amiable Excellencies, keep your Eyes fixt upon her Beauty, till you find her Image imprest upon your Soul.

1. *She is an excellent Virtue of the Mind of man.* Man is the noblest Creature in the Universe; the Soul is the noblest Part of man; the Understanding is the noblest Power of the Soul; and Wisdom is the noblest Virtue of that Power, the most beautiful Embellishment of the Mind of man.

Other Virtues are for the most part seated in *the Will*, and their Office is the Moderation and Govern-

Government of all the inferiour Appetites and Affections: But Wisdom has her Throne in the highest Place, is seated in the noblest Power of the Soul, the Mind or *Understanding* of man, and thence sends forth her Influence upon all the Powers and Motions of the Soul, the Actions and Interests of the whole Life. There she sits as a Queen, and is attended with an honourable *Train* of excellent Virtues. *Temperance* stands on her right Hand, and *Patience* on her left. *Fortitude*, *Justice*, *Clemency* and *Goodness* stand before her Face, and *Humility* sits at her feet, and when ever she stirs abroad, *Contentment* attends all her Motions. Thus she is truly honourable in her Attendants, and in all her Appearances, and makes him that entertains her honourable and happy.

She is an *Energetical Virtue*, powerfully operative. She gives not only a directive Light, but sheds forth also such a mighty Influence, as makes the Motions of the Soul and Actions of the Life agreeable.

2.

She proceeds upon a clear Apprehension and right Judgment of things. For the wise man's Eyes are in his Head: but the Fool walketh in Darknes. [Ecc. 2. 14.]

3.

Hereby the whole Soul is carried out, in a well govern'd Order, in an earnest and constant Pursuit of the most excellent Attainments. There is a threefold Act of Wisdom, viz.

4.

1. To propose the most excellent End; as the Glory of God, and mans Good and Happiness.

2. To

But as I have select the *best means*, which are most proper and powerfully conducing therunto.

3. To engage the most earnest *Endeavours*, in the diligent Use of these Means, for the Attainment of this End.

And thus ye have seen what Wisdom is: Come we now to consider,

II. Wherein the Excellency of Wisdom lies. The Excellency of things adventitious to the Essence or Being of men, lies in their Usefulness, or Subserviencie to his Well-being and Blessedness. Those things which give him Support, Defence, and Lustre in the Eyes of the World, are commonly accounted excellent. Such are *Riches, Power and Honour*. *Riches* are a Support, *Power* a Defence, *Honour* an Ornament to men, giving a Lustre to their Persons and Actions. These, men are wont to pursue with much Earnestness, as most excellent Attainments, seeing they render them as *Princes amongst the Poor, as Gods among men*.

But now the Excellency of Wisdom, which gives it a Preheminence above all these extrinseck Accessions, lies in this, that it conduces to the Perfection of the Nature of man, advances him to a Similitude to the most high God, and leads him to the Fruition of the chiefest Good, and so gives him Possession of the highest Happiness. The most splendid things on Earth are oft-times given to those *Sinners*, who shall never see Gods Face in Heaven: but true Wisdom is the *lustrous* *ornament* of the Saints, which leads them, by the Actions of a good Life, to

the Beatifick Vision of God in Glory. Though secular Advantages then are sought for with great Earnestness, and esteem'd Excellent, *Wisdom is the principal thing*, 'tis much more excellent.

*1. Wisdom is better than Riches**. Riches are a comfortable Accessory to the Animal Life. Wisdom makes a man almost equal with Angelical Beings. Hence 'twas said of David, *My Lord the King is as an Angel of God*. Now what's the Life of a Beast to the active Excellency of an Angel? Certainly a Wise man, though without Wealth, does as much excel a Rich man, without Wisdom, as an Angel does an Ass laden with Gold. Thou hast Wisdom and wantest Riches; another has Riches and wants Wisdom. Now tell me, Canst thou be content to barter Conditions with him; to part with thy Wisdom to be possesst of his Wealth? No, 'tis impossible. For he is already a Fool, who can consent to such an Exchange. This must needs extort a Confession from every one of you, that Wisdom is better than Riches, which yet is the golden Oyl, which sets all the Wheels of Action throughout the whole World in Motion.

*There is not certainly a more nable Possession than that of Wisdom**. Riches are but an Addition to the outward Estate: Wisdom is the Ennoblement of the Mind of man. The one is but as a Prop set to a ruinous House: the other as a royal Diadem set on the Head of a Sovereign Prince. The Excellency of a thing may

may be estimated by the Loss or Deprivation. Now tell me, to which would ye rather consent; To have an Eye pluckt out of your Head, or to have a Skirt cut off from your Garment? Wisdom is as *the Eye of mans Soul*, whereas Riches, as a *Skirt of a Garment*, are but an Addition to his Estate, which oft-times are more a Burden than an Ornament.

Certainly the greatest Excellency and Praise of Riches is this, that they are good *Instruments of Virtue*. Their Excellency then lies in their Use, to which they neither are, nor can be apply'd without the Direction of Wisdom. Wisdom then is *the Principal thing*, to which Riches are subservient, when they become the Means of Glory to God, or Good to men. *How much better then is it to get Wisdom than Gold? and to get Understanding rather to be chosen than Silver ||? Yea Wisdom (saith Solomon) is better than Rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it*. And therefore,*

|| Pro. 16.
16.

● Prov. 8.
11.

2. *Wisdom is to be prefer'd before Power*. Power, unless directed by Wisdom, like *the dreadful Thunder*, breaks all in pieces. As a *Sword in a mad mans Hand*, such is great Power, which not being guided by Wisdom, becomes the Instrument of Rage and Folly. Power without Wisdom, is but as *the strength of a Beast*, dangerous and destructive. Wisdom in War is more Excellent than Power and strength. *A wise man (saith Solomon) scaletb the City of the Mighty ||. Victory is often owing to a wise Conduct,*

|| Prov. 21.
22.

Conduct, than the brutish strength of an ungovern'd Bddy of People.

Moreover, the Power of a Prince is his Authority for the Government of his People. This is a Splendid and Noble Thing, an Excellency worthy to be Crown'd with Honour : But yet even this must give place to Wisdom, as the greater Excellency. Government is properly the direction of the actions of men to excellent ends for the Publick Good. Now hereunto two things are requisite, Right and Skill, or an ability to do it : The former without the latter is altogether insignificant and useles; the latter (when they are conjoyn'd) is the Lustre and Glory of the former. Now the former, Right to Govern, is Authority; the latter, Skill to do it well, is Wisdom. This then being the Praise and Glory of the other, as rendering it useful for the Publick Good, which is its only Excellency, is much more Excellent. For that which makes another thing excellent, must needs be more excellent it self. If Power and Authority then do owe their Excellency and Use, fulness to Wisdom, Wisdom that applyes them to their proper ends, must needs be much more excellent. *A wise man is better than a King.* || say the Hebrew Doctors. For (say they) if a wise man die, there is not presently found a wise man to succeed him; but if a King die, there's not a man of Israel, but may be made a King : Yea, they have a bolden Proverb in the praise of Wisdom; *Kings are the Judges of the Earth, but wise men are the Judges of Kings.* *

D

3. Wisdom

החכם
קודם
למלך

המלכים
שופטי
ארץ
וחכמים
שופטי
מלכים

3. *Wisdom excels Honour* : Honour without Virtue is but an *empty Title*, but Wisdom is a real Excellency, a rare endowment of the Mind of Man : Where there is Virtue to support Honour, there Honour is *the lustre of Virtue* : But now Wisdom is it self a most excellent Virtue of the mind of Man ; and therefore as much as the substance of Gold excels the shine, so much does Wisdom excell Honour.

Honour is but *the estimation of Excellency*, or rather some *extrinſick Testimony* of that Estimation : But Wisdom is a real Excellency, which gives an *intrinſick Worth* and Value to the Mind of Man, and therefore is much to be preferr'd before that Honour which stands in some outward acknowledgement. What's a *Gilded Title* to a Noble Mind, or a little *popular Air*, to that Excellency of Spirit, which renders a man usefull for the Publick ?

But if any are delighted with *the shine of Gold*, let them possess themselves of that bright-fac'd Metall, and then they may please themselves as much as they will with its shining lustre. Do ye delight in Honour ? seek for Wisdom, and Honour will not fail to attend you : *Exalts Her, and she shall promote thee ; she shall bring thee to Honour, when thou dost embrace her, &c.*

Thus ye see the Excellency of Wisdom to be such, as that it may justly challenge the precdency of Riches, and Power, and Honour, which are the most *coveted advantages*, that I may not say, *Vanities* of the world. And so
you

you have seen wherein that Excellency of Wisdom lies, which justly denominates her *the Principal thing* : I come now to prove,

III. That this Excellency is attainable, and to show you by what means you may attain it.

The *Throne of Wisdom* is on High, and this World may seem to be left as the *Stage* on which *Folly* is come to act her part : Wisdom is so great an Excellency, that it may well be question'd whether it can be found on Earth : Yet certainly this Excellency is attainable. If we be but serious and constant in our Endeavours, we may come to have our Souls adorn'd with the Lights, and crown'd with the Glories of Wisdom.

1. 'Tis not sure in vain, that the Wife Man doth here commend Wisdom to us, and exhort us to the most earnest Endeavours to acquire it: *Wisdom is the principal thing ; therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding.* God is not wont to delude men, in commanding them to seek that, which he is resolv'd he will deny, or knows they cannot attain. This Excellency Wisdom is then certainly attainable.

2. God has assign'd unto Men that Work in the World, which cannot possibly be done without Wisdom ; and yet if it be not done, he has subjected them to an inevitable Necessity of bearing his Wrath, and being eternally miserable. Wisdom is the * first Principle of Religion and Piety, whereby Man gives unto God the Glory due unto his Name. || This is his great

* Psalm
111. 10.
Pro. 1. 7.
and 9. 10.
|| Psalm
29. 2.

Work in this world. And he that does not thus honour God on Earth, must expect no Glory nor Happiness in Heaven : What then remains, but that he must bear his own Guilt, and God's Wrath in Hell? Now if Wisdom was not attainable that this work might be done, this would be nothing else but a cruel design of the Eternal destruction of all Mankind, which is utterly inconsistent with the Divine Philanthropy, the essential Goodness of God, and his unspeakable Love to Man : And therefore true Wisdom is certainly attainable.

3. God hath given to Man a Rational Soul, furnished with excellent Powers and Faculties, whereby it's capable of the most Noble Endowments, and agreeable Actions; as a Power of discerning betwixt Good and Evil; *the Understanding* : and a Power of choosing the Good, and refusing the Evil; *the Will*. How far these Faculties are impeded by *the depravation of Nature*, and again relieved by *the aids of Grace*, I shall not now discourse. Certain it is, To know and discern is essential to the Understanding: to choose or refuse is essential to the Will. Hereby God hath given to Man an immediate capacity of Wisdom, which stands in the knowledge of excellent things, the proposal of excellent ends, and the Choice and Use of the most proper means for the attainment of those ends. He that lives in the Use of his Reason, in the exercise of these Noble Powers of his Soul, is, in some degree, Wise. He that applies his Understanding to the Knowledge of that which God reveals

reveals to be good for Man, and imployes all his Powers in the diligent and constant prosecution of it, hath attain'd to true Wisdom. This Method is so Natural, this Motion is so agreeable, that it cannot but plainly appear, that this Excellency, this rare Endowment of the Mind of Man, Wisdom and Understanding is attainable.

Neither need I insist on the Means, by which it may be attain'd, seeing that has already been declar'd in some measure in the foremention'd Proofs and Instances of its attainableness : I shall only add, True Wisdom may be attain'd by the Means :

1. *A due Government of a Man's self.* He that would attain Wisdom, must not permit an Ataxy in his own Soul : He must not suffer the Inferiour Powers thereof to Usurp an Empire and Regency over the Superiour. He must carefully maintain the Right and Power of Reason in the Government of the Appetite and Passions. The sensitive Powers must be strictly held in subjection to the Rational : Keep Reason in her Throne, and She will soon be inur'd to the Government of all the motions of the Soul, the actions of the Life, according to the Rules of Wisdom.

2. *A serious || consideration of a Mans State.* || Deut. 32.
There's an Eternal State of Happiness or Misery 29.
remains for every Man after death, according to his demeanour in this Life. The Wicked * Mar. 25.
shall be tormented in * Eternal Fire : the Right- ult.
teous shall || shine as the Sun, in the splendours || Mar. 13.
of 43.

of a superexcellent Glory, which shall never suffer the least Eclipse. Now a Holy and Virtuous Life is the Way and Means to this State of Excellent Glory. The lively consideration hereof must needs be of mighty Power and Influence to incline a man to the choice and use of these Means, in order to so excellent an end: And herein lies Man's true Wisdom.

3. *A diligent study of the Holy Scriptures*; Herein are contain'd the Oracles of God, wherein his hidden Wisdom is reveal'd to Men. The Holy Bible is *the Book of Wisdom*. Of this blessed Book may be truly said, that which (not without great vanity) was inscrib'd upon the Tomb of *Pherecydes the Syrian*; * *Here lies Wisdom in its highest Perfection*. That Wisdom which shineth in its highest Glory, amongst Angels in Heaven, here discloseth it self in its amiable and most attractive Beauties to men on Earth. By Meditation on God's Testimonies Holy *David* became || *wiser than his Enemies, wiser than the Ancients, wiser than his Teachers*, whose Office it was to teach him Wisdom: *The Holy Scriptures are able to make a man wise to Salvation*: * Herein God hath set before us, and propos'd unto us those things, in the Knowledge and Practise whereof stands that True Wisdom, which is Man's greatest Excellency and Glory. The Holy Gospel is the manifestation of *the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom, which God Ordain'd before the World unto our Glory*. || The wisest men that ever were in the world, who were

* The
eterni-
ty of
God's
La-
ert.

|| Ps. 119.
98, 99,
100.

* 2 Tim.
3. 15.

|| 1 Cor. 2.
7.

were not immediately inspired by God, ow'd their Excellent Wisdom to the study of his Holy Word. That great *Oracle of Wisdom*, and State-Politie, the Lord *Verulam*, confest he ow'd his Wisdom to the *Works of Solomon*, particularly the Book of the *Proverbs*. The Holy Scriptures are that *Great Light*, which God hath set up and appointed to give the Light of Wisdom to the Rational World.

And thus you see by what Means this Excellency, that so ennobles the mind of Man, may be attain'd.

Now me thinks every one of you should be inflam'd with a Generous Desire of so great an Excellency, and should resolve to be diligent and serious in your endeavours for the attainment of it. It's an Argument of a base and mean Spirit to rest in an inglorious sloth, when a man is call'd to an Honourable Employment. Behold, here's a Noble Design, a Work worthy to engage all your Powers, though ye were the greatest Princes on Earth, *the Acquisition of Wisdom*. Wisdom is the greatest Excellency and Adornment of the Soul of Man, and renders him amiable and illustrious in the sight of God. Wisdom more adorns a King than His Royal Diadem, and redeems the meanest man from an unregarded Obscurity, and renders him truly Excellent and Honourable. A wise Man, though in never so poor and mean Estate, is a *bright Star*, incircled with his own Rayes of Glory, and need not envy the proudest Princes their Secular Greatness and Honour.

There

There are many things Excellent, Great, Glorious in the worlds eye, which men are wont to pursue with great earnestness, and would account themselves very happy in the acquisition and attainment of them : But, *Wisdom is the principal thing ; therefore get Wisdom, &c. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee, &c.*

Such is the Excellency and desirableness of Wisdom ; and therefore, 1. *Get Wisdom :* 2. *Use Wisdom :* and 3. *Let your Wisdom be accompanied with those Virtues and Graces, which may demonstrate its Excellency and Glory.*

1. *Get Wisdom ; why should you take up with any other acquisition, when you are capable of so great an Excellency ? What is it in the world on which men put the greatest value ? Silver, Gold, Gems ? Know, Wisdom is more excellent and desirable : It cannot be gotten for Gold, neither shall Silver be weighed for the price thereof : It cannot be valued with the Gold of Ophir, with the precious Onyx or the Sapphire : The Gold and Crystal cannot equal it ; and the exchange of it shall not be for Jewels of fine Gold. No mention shall be made of Coral or of Pearls ; for the price of Wisdom is above Rubies : The Topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure Gold.* The Gold of Ophir, the Tapaz of Ethiopia, the precious Onyx and the Sapphire, the Crystal and the Coral are not worthy to be compar'd to Wisdom. Did men but know the worth of Wisdom, the finest Gold, the fairest Pearls,*

* Job 28.

15—19.

Pearls, the richest Rubies, would find but small regard. Could the Excellency and Beauty of Wisdom be presented to the eye of man, the finest Gold would cease to shine, the fairest Pearls would soon grow pale, and the richest Rubies would blush for shame, as wholly vanquish'd by so rare a Virtue, and render'd of little or no value.

Wisdom is the Excellency of the most Noble Beings; it's the Praise of Men, the Perfection of Angels, the Glory of God: The Sun is the Glory of the world, Light of the Sun: God is the Glory of all Beings, Wisdom is the Glory of God. Now how great an Honour is it for a Mortal Man to be * *like to the most High God*, in that Excellency, which is his Glory! To glitter in Gold is accounted a great Glory; but it's a far greater, to be an Earthly God, in the Excellency of Wisdom: *Get Wisdom therefore, and with all your getting get Understanding.* For,

* *Σοφία*
ἔστιν ἰσο-
νομία τοῦ
Θεοῦ.
Alcin. c. 2.
Θεὸς δὲ
ἀπεργα-
ζῶται ἢ
σχηματίζ-
εσθαι.

1. Wisdom will give the greatest Excellency to your Persons: 'Tis Wisdom that *makes a Mans face to shine*: || For it impresses upon him a *Ray of the Glory of God*: * *Wise men on Earth are like the stars in Heaven*, say the Hebrew Doctors. Certainly, *Wisdom excels Folly, as far as Light excels Darknes*. * *There's not more difference betwixt a Man and a Beast, than betwixt a Wise Man and a Fool.* Wisdom will crown you with a singular Glory; 'twill make you as *Princes* amongst the People, as *Angels* amongst men.

|| Eccl. 8.
 1.

* *דומים*
התנמים
כאין
למדות
בשמים

* Eccl. 2.
 13.

The Excellency of Wisdom.

2. 'Twill make you beneficial to others : 'Tis the Glory of Man to be the Means of Good to many : 'Twas the Wisdom of *Joseph*, which prefer'd him to that great Honour in *Egypt*, which gave him a mighty Capacity of doing Good ; and so he became the Means of sustaining his Fathers Family, yea, the whole Land of *Egypt*, and all the Neighbouring Countries in the years of Famine. By Wisdom ye may not only promote the *Welfare of your own Country*, but also contribute to the *Safety, Peace and Honour of the whole Kingdom*. 'Tis Wisdom will make you living Images of the great God, and mighty Instruments of Good to men.

3. 'Twill make you truly Happy and Honourable ; Happy in the Favour of God, Honourable in the Esteem of Men. True Wisdom is alwayes attended with a train of Excellent Virtues, and it intitles men to the highest Honours, to Immortal Glories in the Kingdom of God. The Glory of Wisdom out-lasts mens Life, and shall have a Resurrection with their Bodies from the Grave : For when the Day is come, that the Dead shall rise from the Dust, then shall *they that be Wise shine as the brightness of the Firmament ;* || in the lustre of a superexcellent Glory, in the Kingdom of God : *Happy then is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the man that getteth Understanding : For length of dayes is in her right hand, and in her*
left hand Riches and Honour. * Glory is the inheritance of Wisdom : For *the wise shall inherit Glory ; when shame shall be the promotion*
of

|| Dan. 12.
3.

* Prov. 3.
13, 16.

of Fools. || Get Wisdom then, and with all your getting get Understanding. Exalt Her, and She shall promote thee; She shall bring thee to Honour, when thou dost embrace Her: She shall give to thine Head an Ornament of Grace, a Crown of Glory shall She deliver to thee. || Prov. 3. ult.

Be sensible of your want of Wisdom. It's not to be imagin'd, that he should earnestly endeavour to get Wisdom, who has an Opinion that he is already Wise: Be not wise therefore in your own conceits: || Let no man deceive himself: If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, ('tis the Apostles Counsel) let him become a Fool that he may be wise: * For he that thinks himself sufficiently Wise, is certainly a Fool: whereas he, who being sensible of his Folly, seeks after Wisdom, begins to be Wise. || Rom. 12. 16. * 1 Cor. 13. 18.

Seek then after Wisdom as the Principal Excellency and ennoblement of your Nature: and that ye may attain it,

I. Converse with the Wise: For be that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of Fools shall be destroy'd: * This world is the Temple of God: Wise Men are Lamps, which God hath lighted up therein. One Lamp may be lighted from another. From them ye may derive that Light of Wisdom, which will make you to shine in the eyes of God and Men: But know the truly virtuous are the only Wise. The Light of Wisdom shines in a Holy Life, as a bright star in a serene skie. Choose then Holy and Good Men for your

|| Psalm
119. 63.

intimate Companions, that through the Light and influence of their Communications and Example, you may learn Wisdom by a living Law. Thus Holy David, *I am a Companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy Precepts.* || These are as God's Mystick Seals, by which he impresses Wisdom on the minds of men.

2. Ask Wisdom of God : For the LORD giveth Wisdom, out of his mouth cometh Knowledge and Understanding.* God is the Fountain of Wisdom, being infinitely, essentially wise. Angels excel in Wisdom : these bright Lamps which burn before the Throne of God, were lighted up by his Glorious Beams. To whom then should Man go, who wants and desires Wisdom, but to the All-wise God? 'Tis He that hath said, *Ask, and it shall be given you.**

* Prov. 2. 6.
* Matt. 7. 7.
Luk. 11. 9.

Did the poorest man present know where he might have Gold for asking, he would soon out-shine the Rich, and disdain to fill his Treasury with any baser Metal : But he that asks Gold of the Rich, shall but be derided for the insolency of his request. But, *If any of you lack Wisdom (which is better than Gold) let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* || Thus did King Solomon become the wisest man in the World.

E Jam. 1. 5.

3. Engage your selves with all seriousness in the exercise of a solid Piety, and the Virtues of a Holy Life : For, *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom : A good Understanding have*

have all they that do his Commandments. * Live not then at random ; but make an Election upon a due deliberation of that course of Life, which you apprehend to be most excellent and agreeable to the Divine Will, and most conducive to your future good, your eternal happiness : Bind your self with the firmest Resolutions, notwithstanding all difficulties and discouragements, to persist in this way, till you attain your end. When you are assaulted with Temptations, remember then not to act according to your present inclinations, but according to that Election you have made, those resolutions which you have fixed in your soul, upon a mature deliberation : This is your highest Wisdom, to act according to the Rules of Virtue, with an unshaken constancy, till you shall receive a Crown of Glory. *Psalm 111. 10.*

Thus I have shew'd you the way and means whereby ye must get Wisdom. Now,

II. Learn to use Wisdom : Let Wisdom be your Guide in all your Affairs, and Understanding your directress in all your undertakings : Be diligent, serious and constant in doing those things wherein true Wisdom doth consist. Assemble all the Powers of your Soul for this purpose. The Sun incessantly moves in the Heavens, and as incessantly shines on the Earth ; so do ye in the Lights of Wisdom, till ye shall be incircled with Raies of Glory in the presence of God. Enter then into the paths of Virtue, that ye may shine in the Lights of Wisdom. Desist from Sin, as the greatest Folly ; believe in Christ,

Christ, obey his Gospel, and submit to his Government, that ye may secure the salvation of your Souls, which is your highest Wisdom.

Let your Wisdom disclose it self in your
1. *Piety towards God*; 2. *Loyalty to the King*; and 3. *Love and Charity to one another*: I shall propose these Duties to you, only as proofs of the Wisdom, the proper acts and indications of this excellent Virtue.

Let your Wisdom shine in your Piety towards God: True Wisdom comes from God, and discloses its Excellency and Divine Original by those Acts of Religion and Piety, by which Man makes the nearest approaches to God. Religion, in its *Rise*, is Mans Return to God; in its *Progress*, his Honouring of God by acts of Devotion, and the Virtues of a Holy Life; in its *End*, his Union with God, and fruition of him as the chiefest Good, and his highest happiness for ever.

Now if Religion and Piety, which comprehends all the Virtues and Duties of a good Life, be the proper argument and evidence of True Wisdom, certainly *Atheism and Irreligion, Debauchery and Sin* are undeniable evidences of the want of this excellency. Swearing, Lying, Cursing, Drinking to excess, Whoredom and Uncleaness, Cheating and Over-reaching for gain, are visible *badges of folly, and marks of madness* upon men. For is it not desperate folly and madness in a Mortal Man, to make Almighty God his Enemy, by slighting his Authority, breaking his Laws, and despising his Government?

ment? Is it not Folly and Madneſs in men, to provoke Him to wrath by their ſins, in whoſe Favour lies all their Felicity? Is it not Folly and Madneſs in Men, made after the Image of God, for a little ſordid gain, or filthy pleaſure of Sin, to caſt away all poſſible hopes of future happineſs in Heaven?

Take heed then, ye that would be accounted *Sons of Wiſdom*, that ye be not juſtly charged with Folly. Let not an Oath, a Curſe, or any corrupt Communication be heard to come out of your mouths; drink not to exceſs, nor provoke any other to drink to your meaſure. Let not your Meeting this Day be a *Feaſt of Fools*. If any man ſwear an Oath, let him pay for his folly, and bear his own ſhame, while ye manifeſt your Wiſdom, in drawing from the *mire and filth of your Country* (the ſwaggering, ſwearing debauchee is no better) ſome profit for the relief of the Poor.

2. Shew your ſelves wiſe men by your Loyalty to your King. Law and Government is the greateſt ſecurity we have under Heaven for our Lives and Liberties, our Religion and Property, and whatſoever is or ought to be dear unto us. Take away the *fence of Law*, break down *the Wall of Government*, and all is inſtantly laid open and common. The ſtrong will oppreſs the weak, the Poor will prey upon the Rich, and the Lives of the Innocent will be in the hands of the Cruel. *A fruitful Land* will ſoon become a *barren Wiſdomneſs*. Cities and Dwelling-houſes would be turn'd into.

into Dens of Bruit-beasts, and wild salvages in the shapes of men. Loose but the Bonds of Government, and all things would instantly run into Confusion, and men would still prey upon one another, till they became all a prey to a Foreign Foe, all inflav'd to a Foreign Yoke. To prevent so great mischiefs, it's the Wisdom of every man to contribute what he can to the Conservation of the Law and Government under which he lives, in its full Strength and Beauty. Now the *Loyalty and Obedience* of the Subjects to their Sovereign, gives the greatest strength to the Law, and Beauty to the Government.

He that breaks a Law opens a Gap in the Fence, and he that despiseth Authority, exposes the Government to Contempt. When a Multitude, *in pursuit of some particular Advantage, or for the redress of some particular Grievance*, combines together to over-bear the Law, and subvert the Government of a Kingdom, they act the greatest folly imaginable, by destroying the best security they have for all they enjoy. They do but try their Forces to sink the Ship wherein they sail; to pull down the House in which they dwell; to overthrow the Stage on which they stand, to their inevitable Ruine.

The Sovereign Power is the Soul of the Law and Government: He that weakens this Power, goes about to destroy the Law, to subvert the Government: But Loyalty and Obedience to the Sovereign, who governs his Subjects by
Good

Good Laws, preserves the Law in its full Force, and the Government in its Lustre and Glory. Now this is your greatest security for your dearest interests, and will be a proof of your Wisdom, and render you the Worthies of your Country.

3. Demonstrate your Wisdom by your Love and Charity to one another. Union is a work of Wisdom, as mightily conducing to the greater good of the parts united. Now Brotherly Love is the beautiful band of Union: *Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for Brethren (of the same Countrey, of the same City, of the same Church) to dwell together in Unity.* || Unity is the Beauty and Strength of || Pg. 133.
a Society, its Safety and Glory. The Branch¹ by its Union with the Tree, the Stone with the Building, a Member with the Body, secures it self and the Body, the Building, the Tree: but when this Union is dissolv'd, the part, if not the whole, is soon destroy'd. 'Tis then your Wisdom to maintain that Union by Brotherly Love, which is so conducive to your mutual Good. This will be your Strength and Beauty, your Excellency and Honour. The Conservation and Improvement hereof for its proper ends, will be your Wisdom, as Men, and as Christians, your Crown and Glory.

But then *to your Brotherly Kindness add Charity*; * in the Relief of those that are in Distress, in the Redemption of your poor Bre- 7.
thren from the Ignominy, Obscurity and Misery of an indigent Condition. This will be a

|| Mat. 6.
20.

singular Proof of your Wisdom, as well as a visible mark of your Christianity. 'Twill be your Wisdom in dayes of Danger, to secure your Estates; and nothing can be so safe as that which (by Acts of Charity) *is laid up in Heaven.* || It's certainly an Act of great Wisdom in a man, to improve his Temporal Estate to the best advantage. And this improvement is the best made, this advantage is best secur'd by the Offices of Charity. For by doing Good to others, a man treasures up Glory to himself. For though the Poor may seem a barren soil, he that sows this *precious Seed*, shall reap Honour on Earth, and rewards in Heaven. Divine Charity is the only Excellent *Chymistry*; it turns even Dross into Gold. Hereby you may commute your Temporal Riches for Eternal Treasures. 'Tis the Grain not stor'd up in the Garner, but sown in the Fields, that yields the plentiful encrease.

If God then by his Blessing hath given you a Temporal Estate, it's your Wisdom to imploy some part thereof *in Works of Charity*, as the best improvement for an Eternal Advantage. They who most abound with worldly Goods, are but *Stewards of Gods Blessings*, and 'tis their Wisdom to imploy them according to his Will. This is the Proof of their Fidelity, whereupon they may expect God's Acceptance and a great reward.

That Advantage is most to be valued, which is of greatest extent and longest duration. Such is the advantage which may be acquir'd by the
Offices

Offices of Charity. For hereby many persons may be rais'd from an unprofitable sloth and deep poverty, to a happy Capacity of doing good to others; and then will the Glory of all their good deeds redound to you. So may ye do good after this Life, and bring Glory to God, when ye shall sleep in your *Beds of Honour*; such are the Graves of good men, who having finish'd their course of Virtue, *lie down in Glory*, and rest in the hope of a happy Resurrection to the Glorious Joys of an endless Life.

'Tis certainly a commendable Act of Charity, to take Children out of poor Families, and train them up in honest Trades and Callings, whereby they may become serviceable to the Publick Good. [*You may here behold this day some Instances of the Fruits of this Charity* *.] From these *neglected Quarries*, are those stones sometimes taken, which are the *Strength and Beauty of the Building*; the stately Pinnacles and Top-stones thereof.

* Above 60 Youths put out Apprentices in London by the Charities of this Aniversary Feast.

Wisdom shines in her brightest splendour in the Works of Charity, which are the *paths to Honour*. Count it your Glory then to do Good; to be Beneficial to your poor Brethren. *Hide not your selves from your own flesh* ||. Nothing is more Divine, than to do Good *. *It's a more blessed thing to give, than to receive* ||. Honour God then with your substance *, and relieve the Poor with some part of your Estate: So shall the Poor at once lift up their eyes upon you, and their hands to Heaven and bless

|| Isa. 38.
7. *Τὸ δὲ πρῶτον, ἂν τοῦτο μὴ φοβῆσθαι ἑαυτὸν*
31. *ἢ ἂν θεὸς*
Synes. Ep. 31.
|| Acts 20.
35.
* Pro. 3. 9.

you, while they behold you with Love and Veneration, as so many *Living Images* of the Eternal Divinity, the Sovereign Beauty and Goodness.

Thus I have shew'd you the right Use, and best improvement of Wisdom, for the Glory of God, and Good of Men. Now in the last place,

III. Let your Wisdom be accompani'd with those Virtues and Graces, which may with the most convincing Light and Evidence attest its Original, and justifie it to the World, to be the Off-spring of Heaven, the Daughter and the delight of God; as with *Innocency, Meekness and Humility.*

1. *Innocency.* Defraud no Man, wrong no Man; *Be wise as Serpents, but be harmless as Doves* ||. *Wisdom buildeth her House*, but not with the Ruines of her Neighbour. He that does wrong to another, doth the greatest injury to himself: For he subjects himself to *Gods* || *Wrath*, and his Estate to his * *Curse*, which may not only secretly consume his ill-gotten Goods, but also bring his whole Estate to nothing. No Man can shine in the Lights of Wisdom, but *in the State of Innocency.*

* Mar. 10.
16.

† 1 Thess.
4. 6.

* Mal. 2. 2.

2. *Meekness.* Disturb no man: Disquiet not your selves by letting loose your unruly Passions. Folly is clamorous and troublesome, but Tranquillity and Peace are the inseparable Companions of Celestial Wisdom. *The Wisdom that is from above, is, first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easie to be entreated* ||.

|| Jam. 3.
17.

Wisdom

Wisdom is a glorious Princess, and She Governeth her Subjects in Peace. Unruly Passions are not permitted to keep their Revels under her Regency. These Rebels against Reason are bound in Chains, or banish'd from her Dominion. He is a Wise man that knows well how to Govern a City; but he more excels in Wisdom, who knows how to govern his own Spirit.*; who ^{*Prov. 16. 32.} upon all Provocations, can keep his Passions under the Rule and Regency of Reason. He is both a Fool, and dangerous, who upon every petty discontent is ready to set his own House on fire, and does what he can to put the Neighbourhood into a flame. Where the Spirit of a Man takes fire, with a little spark, a slight Provocation, there is wanting the Austerity of Wisdom.*

3. Humility. Despise no man : He that despiseth his Neighbour is void of Wisdom ||. Pride ^{13.} not your selves in the Opinion of your own ^{|| Prov. 11. 12.} Excellency : For when pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is Wisdom*. ^{* Prov. 11. 2.} Wisdom cohabits with Humility, and therefore let not the Wise Man Glory in his Wisdom ||, or ^{|| Jer. 9. 23.} despise his Neighbour because of his Folly. ^{* 1 Cor. 4. 7.} Alas, O Man, who made thee to differ*! The Great God who made you both, might have given him Wisdom, and said of thee, Let him be a Fool. Art thou wiser than another? Be not lifted up : there are others wiser than thou. If thou wast in deed wiser than all men, yet what was thy Wisdom, but Folly to the most Wise God? Certainly thou canst not deserve
so

|| Job 4.
18.

so much Folly in the weakest man, as the All-wise God discerns in thee. Angels excell in Wisdom, yet the most Wise God *charges them with Folly* ||. Now dost thou not desire, that God who sees Folly in thee, may not despise thee? Then remember, that it is the Will of God, and there is the greatest Reason in the world, that thou shouldest not despise thy Brother, though thou perceivest in him a want of Wisdom. Has God given you Wisdom, conserve it in Humility, and it will be your great Glory. Angels excell in Wisdom, and they are exemplary in Humility : They veil * their faces in the presence of God, and give Glory to His Name : And it is an Act of Humility in Man, to give the Glory of all his Excellency to God : And therefore, *To God alone be ascribed, * Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing, and Praise, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

* Isa. 6.2,
3.

* Rev. 7.
12.

F I N I S.

Coronis.

THE *SERMON* ended, the *FEAST* begins. Herein the *Example* is added to the *Rule* : The *DOCTRINE* delivered, presently (in its *Warmth and Vigour*) issues into *PRACTICE*. *Brotherly Love* is exprest by *Feasting together*, and then in the *Cloſe*, a *Liberal Contribution* is made for the *Offices of Charity*. And thus *RELIGION*, attended with *BROTHERLY LOVE* and *CHARITY*, (the principal *Graces of Christians*, and visible *Glories of Christianity*) appears in its *Beauty and Luſtre*, in theſe *LOVE-FEASTS* of the *Natives* of our *Countrey*. This was all prudently managed, with *Good Order, Civility and Sobriety*, by the *STEWARDS* of the *Feaſt*, for this preſent Year, *MDCLXXV*, whoſe *Names* (that the Reader may know to whom the foregoing *SERMON*, preach'd upon their *Choice and Call*, is owing) are here expreſt;

M^r THOMAS HOLLIER,
M^r JOSEPH COLINGE,
M^r WILLIAM SAVAGE,
M^r JOHN SAPCOT,

M^r THO. DAFFORNE,
M^r JOHN EOND,
M^r THOMAS GIBBS,
M^r SAMUEL BARON.

The *Feast* ended, *Stewards* for the following Year are chosen, by setting of *Garlands of Laurel* upon their Heads, with the *Sound of Musick*, and the *Plaudits of the People*. Herein there is a little, but lively *Representation* of that *Honour and Happiness*, which is reserved in *Heaven*, for those Persons, who live in the *Exercise of Religion, Brotherly Love, and Charity*, here upon Earth. For at the end of their *Life* (which upon the Account of the *Peace and Joy* of a good Conscience, will be but as the *Close of a Festival*) they shall be *Crown'd with Glory*, and with joyful *Harmonies and Hallelujah's* receiv'd, with the *Applauses of ANGELS*, into the *Society of the BLESSED*, and so shall live in the *VISION and FRUITION* of the *Most High GOD*, the *chiefest GOOD*, with Fulness of *Satisfaction*, and *Everlasting Delight*. AMEN.

H A L L E L U J A H.

